



Equestrian portrait of Charles II before a prospect of London

DIEPENBEECK, Abraham van.

Charles le Second: Roy de la Grande Bretagne.

London, 1743. Coloured. 380 x 500mm.

£700

A fine portrait of king-in-exile Charles II on horseback, engraved by Cornelis van Caucerken after a painting by Abraham van Diepenbeeck, published in 'A General System of Horsemanship,' by William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. Charles sits in armour astride a warhorse, with Cupid bringing his helmet; above, angels and cherubs carry royal insignia, led by Athena holding a crown over the king's head; on a lower slope to left, Mercury looking up to Charles and gesturing to a battle, headed by Mars lunging at a three-headed dragon. The allegory not-too-subtly shows Charles's determination to win back his crown and his capital city, seen in the distance. His wish was granted: Oliver Cromwell died in 1658, the year after this portrait was first published, after which the Commonwealth ran out of steam and invited Charles to return. Cavendish, a Royalist commander during the English Civil War, followed Prince Charles into exile in the Low Countries. He was passionate about horses, establishing a riding school in Antwerp and publishing a revolutionary and influential work on equestrian training techniques, 'La Methode et Invention nouvelle de Dresser les Chevaux' in 1657, in which this plate first appeared. This example comes from the second edition (the first in English), published 1743. Most of Diepenbeeck's illustrations show Cavendish training horses at his Antwerp school but this plate shows the Duke's royal



allegiances.

**Altea Gallery Ltd. 35 Saint George St,London W1S 2FN**  
**info@alteagallery.com - www.alteagallery.com**  
**Tel : +44(0) 20 7491 0010**

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